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First name: Kate

Last name: Wanner

Organization: Trust For Public Land

Title: Conservation Director

Comments: Re: South Pond Hut Special Use Permit and Project-Specific Forest Plan Amendment

To whom it may concern:

I'm writing on behalf of Trust for Public Land (TPL) to express our full support for the proposed South Pond Hut Special Use Permit and Project Specific Forest Plan Amendment.

Trust for Public Land worked in partnership with Green Mountain National Forest for seven years to acquire and permanently protect the Rolston Rest property (where the proposed South Pond Hut is located) as an addition to the Green Mountain National Forest. In December 2017, Trust for Public Land pre-acquired the 2,735-acre property, to prevent fragmentation or development of the largest unprotected inholding within GMNF, while we secured federal funds from Land & Water Conservation Fund and readied the property for USFS acquisition. At that time, the property had a four-season off-the-grid cabin that was proposed to be owned by GMNF and managed by the Vermont Huts Association. Unfortunately, within a month of TPL's ownership, the cabin was destroyed by an arsonist. TPL removed the burned debris and restored the disturbed site to a grassy knoll along the ridgeline, with the intent to retain the opportunity for a hut to be rebuilt near the original site, but within the original disturbed area, off the ridgeline, to serve recreationists from the Catamount Trail, Long Trail, VAST trail and proposed Velomont Trail.

We fully support the goal of Vermont Huts Association and the U.S. Forest Service to provide high quality recreation opportunities on this property. The reconstruction and use of this hut supports our original goal for this property and our general mission of providing equitable access to the outdoors.